

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5628
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE JOHANNESBURG 343

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, MINING ENFORCEMENT AND
SAFETY ADMINISTRATION, TECHNICAL SUPPORT, MURRAY JACOBSON;

STATE FOR EATON; COMMERCE FOR SALLY MILLER; BUMINES FOR SHEKARCHI

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EMIN, ENRG, SF
SUBJ: DIESEL EQUIPMENT IN UNDERGROUND COAL MINES

REF: STATE 028490 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. SOUTH AFRICAN CHAMBER OF MINES
COAL MINING EQUIPMENT SPECIALIST, GORDON GRANGE, ASSURED
REGIONAL RESOURCES OFFICER SWEETWOOD FEBRUARY 14 THAT SAG HAS
NOT REPEAT NOT "RULED TO REMOVE ALL DIESEL POWERED EQUIPMENT
FROM UNDERGROUND COAL MINES" IN THIS COUNTRY (REFTEL). FURTHER,
THERE ARE NO PLANS TO DO SO.

2. GRANGE SPECULATED THAT "MISUNDERSTANDING" MAY HAVE
DEVELOPED FROM RECENT REQUESTS MADE BY THE CHAMBER OF MINES
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(TO THE GOVERNMENT MINING ENGINEER'S OFFICE) TO ADHERE IN THE
FUTURE PRECISELY TO SOUTH AFRICAN BUREAU OF STANDARDS (SABS)
REGULATIONS VIS-A-VIS UNDERGROUND COAL MINING PERMISSIBLE
(FLAMEPROOF) STANDARDS. GRANGE NOTED THAT, UNTIL RECENTLY,
U.S. BUREAU OF MINES - APPROVED AMERICAN EQUIPMENT HAD
BEEN CUSTOMARILY "PASSED" BY THE GOVERNMENT MINING
ENGINEER FOR USE UNDERGROUND IN SOUTH AFRICA'S COAL MINES,

LARGELY BECAUSE OF THE COAL MINING INDUSTRY'S CONTINUING DEMAND FOR U.S. EQUIPMENT AND THE "GENERALLY EXCELLENT STANDARDS OF CONSTRUCTION REQUIRED BY THE U.S. BUREAU OF MINES". HE CLAIMS, HOWEVER, THAT CERTAIN OF SABS' ON-GOING EQUIPMENT PERMISSIBILITY REGULATIONS ARE MORE STRINGENT THAN BUREAU OF MINES STANDARDS AND THAT CURRENT CONSIDERATIONS FOCUS ONLY ON AN ATTEMPT TO RATIONALIZE EQUIPMENT APPROVAL PROCEDURES IN SOUTH AFRICA.
END UNCLASSIFIED.

3. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. WE WERE NOT AWARE THAT SOUTH AFRICAN PERMISSIBLE STANDARDS WERE "MORE STRINGENT" THAN BUMINES PROCEDURES, AND HAVE NOT BEEN APPROACHED BY U.S. FIRMS (E.G. JOY, GOODMAN, OR OTHERS) REGARDING MODIFICATION DIFFICULTIES, DISCRIMINATION, OR OTHER SALES-RELATED PROBLEMS. WHILE IT IS POSSIBLE THAT SAG'S "NEW" POLICY MAY NOT YET HAVE FILTERED DOWNWARD TO THE VARIOUS U.S. COMPANIES DOING BUSINESS IN SOUTH AFRICA, IT IS ALSO JUST AS POSSIBLE THAT MODIFICATIONS FROM BUMINES TO SABS STANDARDS ARE NOT PROVIDING SERIOUS PROBLEMS.

4. GIVEN THE INCREASING NUMBER OF QUESTIONS WE ARE RECEIVING HERE FROM MINING AND MINING-RELATED INDUSTRIES REGARDING POSSIBLE CHANGES IN U.S. POLICY TOWARD SOUTH AFRICA, WE ARE RELUCTANT TO QUERY U.S. FIRMS ON THIS QUESTION WITHOUT ASSURANCE THAT AN ISSUE DOES INDEED EXIST. IN SHORT, WE DON'T WANT TO CREATE AN ISSUE. WE WILL, OF COURSE, PURSUE REFTEL'S INQUIRY FURTHER THROUGH SAG CIRCLES AND/OR APPROPRIATE COMPANIES IF MESA OR OTHER INTERESTED
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AGENCIES ARE AWARE OF A DEVELOPING PROBLEM ALONG THE LINES CITED IN PARAS. 2& 3, OR IF QUESTION REMAINS AS PER SUBJECT OF REFTEL. MEANWHILE, WE ARE IN PROCESS OF OBTAINING FOR COMPARATIVE STUDIES COPIES OF CURRENT SABS PERMISSIBLE KFLAMEPROOF) REGULATIONS AND WILL FORWARD IF DESIRED. WE ASSUME, HOWEVER, THAT MESA AND BUMINES ARE FULLY CONVERSANT ON EXISTING SABS PERMISSIBLE REGULATIONS -- STANDARDS THAT, ACCORDING TO GRANGE, HAVE NOT BEEN MODIFIED RECENTLY. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. JOHNSON

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NNN

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